

Consumer News & Views

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Consumer Confidence Slips in November.

The Conference Board **Consumer Confidence Index**[®] declined in November, following an improvement in October. The Index now stands at 135.7 (1985=100), down from 137.9 in October.



“Despite a small decline in November, Consumer Confidence remains at historically strong levels,” said Lynn Franco, Senior Director of Economic Indicators at The Conference Board. “Consumers’ assessment of current conditions increased slightly, with job growth the main driver of improvement. Expectations, on the other hand, weakened somewhat in November, primarily due to a less optimistic view of future business conditions and personal income prospects. Overall, consumers are still quite confident that economic growth will continue at a solid pace into early 2019. However, if expectations soften further in the coming months, the pace of growth is likely to begin moderating.”

Consumers’ optimism about the short-term future declined in November. The percentage of consumers expecting business conditions will improve over the next six months decreased from 26.3 percent to 22.5 percent, while those expecting business conditions will worsen increased, from 7.2 percent to 8.8 percent.

Consumers Plan to Spend More This 2018 Holiday Season.

Consumers say they will spend an average of \$1,007.24 during the holiday season this year, up 4.1 percent from the \$967.13 they said they would spend last year, according to the annual survey released today by the National Retail Federation and Prosper Insights & Analytics.

“The holidays are just around the corner and consumers are ready to shop,” NRF President and CEO Matthew Shay said. “Confidence is near an all-time high, unemployment is the lowest we’ve seen in decades and take-home wages are up. All of that is reflected in consumers’ buying plans. Retailers expect strong demand this year and retailers are prepared with a wide array of merchandise while offering strong deals and promotions during the busiest and most competitive shopping season of the year.”



Tariffs on a wide range of consumer goods from China took effect last month, but Shay noted that retailers imported record volumes of merchandise ahead of the tariffs this summer and said any effect on pricing during the holiday season is expected to be minimal.

The consumer survey comes on top of NRF’s annual holiday spending forecast, which takes into account a variety of economic factors to project overall spending rather than per-consumer spending. The forecast estimated that holiday retail sales in November and December will be up between 4.3 percent and 4.8 percent over 2017 for a total between \$717.45 billion and \$720.89 billion.

Consumers will spend in three main categories during the holidays – gifts, at \$637.67; non-gift holiday items such as food, decorations, flowers and greeting cards, at \$215.04; and other non-gift purchases that take advantage of the deals and promotions throughout the season, at \$154.53.

ACC Video Focuses on Time Shares – Do’s and Don’ts.

The American Consumer Council announced its latest video in ACC’s Consumer Financial Education Series. The new video focuses on Time Share ownership and the do’s and don’t of owning a time share property. It’s entitled, “*What Consumers Should Know about Time Shares Before Buying.*”



The United States has over 9.5 million timeshare owners, and nearly 85% of them say that they are unsatisfied with their ownership. Because of this startling figure, ACC’s latest video addresses some of the key don’ts and do’s when considering timeshare ownership.

To view the video, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2OX0hnFq8k>

ACC’s financial education video series also addresses major issues such as Identity Theft, Child Care, Caring for Aging Parents and financial Challenges When Starting a Family. The new videos are available on ACC’s website at:

www.americanconsumercouncil.org.

Other new videos in ACC’s Financial Education series include:

[Hacker Protection](#)



[Teen Rich - How to Get Started Building Wealth](#)



[Steps to Hiring Reliable Child Care](#)



[Money Challenges When Starting Your Family](#)



ACC Continues 2018-2019 Chapter Expansion and Realignment.

The American Consumer Council (ACC) announced it will continue its local chapter expansion in six states in 2019. ACC’s Board of Directors approved a three-year chapter realignment and expansion plan that calls for additional chapters in Tennessee, Illinois, Iowa, New York, Florida, Alabama and Arizona in 2019. The chapter expansion plan has already been completed in several states including: New York, California, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Kentucky and Texas.

New chapters were launched in 2017 and the first quarter of 2018 in Florida, Wyoming, Washington, and Virginia. As of December 1, 2018, ACC operated 77 state and local consumer councils with a total membership over 242,845 in all 50 states.

ACC also approved several bylaws changes including an addition to the Membership eligibility clause that allows for non-natural persons to become members of ACC and its chapters. While ACC has always allowed businesses and organizations (non-natural persons) to be members, several state and local consumer councils did not have this clause as part of their bylaws. Now, all chapters reflect the ACC bylaws policies and direction.



The Central Valley Consumer Council in Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania

ACC’s Friend of the Consumer Award Recognizes Outstanding Businesses.

Is your business consumer-friendly? Does your business deserve greater recognition for its service to consumers? If so, you should apply for the American Consumer Council’s Friend of the Consumer Award. Now is the time to apply!

Throughout the year, ACC presents its "Friend of the Consumer" Awards. This prestigious award recognizes manufacturers, retailers, and other businesses that produce or sell products in the United States that meet or exceed

federally-mandated standards and are touted by consumers as "consumer friendly."

Each year, ACC awards numerous "Friend of the Consumer" Awards to deserving companies and organizations because they have "demonstrated a commitment to American consumers by providing a specific product or service that fosters consumer confidence and market acceptance."



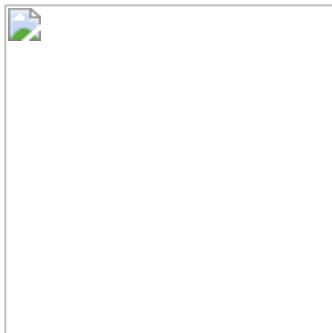
To apply for the "Friend of the Consumer" Award, complete the online application and return it to ACC with the application fee. Applicants will be notified within 5 days of receipt of their application. Thereafter, a panel of independent judges will review your application and make a formal recommendation within 20 days of receipt of your award application.

For more information, visit: <http://www.americanconsumercouncil.org/awards.asp>

Green CSM Certification Accepting Applications for 2019 Cycle:

If your company or organization would like to increase its credibility with consumers, you should consider applying for the **Green CSM Certification**. Applications for the 2019 cycle are now being accepted through March 31, 2019.

It's a proven fact that consumers want to do business with companies that are eco-friendly and practice Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The process is straight-forward and all applicants are recognized by ACC and the Green USA Institute.



All applicants complete the criteria and submit their responses to ACC's Green Consumer Council for review, assessment and feedback. Program details and the **Green CSM Certification** criteria can be viewed at ACC's website located at: <http://americanconsumercouncil.org/greenc.asp>